

Grant Selection Process Report

Legal Applicant: United Way of the Tri-Valley Area **Program name:** UWTVA AC
Recommendation: Recommend for funding with minor budget corrections
Reviewers: Beth Lambert, Ed Barrett

Grant Category: ☒ Formula ☐ Competitive
☒ Other Competition: RURAL
☐ Operating ☐ Planning
Type: ☐ Fixed Price ☐ Ed Award Only
ME Priority Area: [Healthy Futures- Increased food security] **Fed Priority Area(s):** ["Healthy Futures"]

Performance Period: ☒ Year 1 ☐ Year 2 ☐ Year 3
Start/End Date: [09/01/2017] to [08/31/2018]

<p>Request for New Resources</p> <p>New CNCS Funds: <u>\$ 26,927.00</u></p> <p>Match Committed: <u>\$ 19,443.00</u></p> <p>Total Grant Budget: <u>\$ 46,370.00</u></p> <p>Cost Per Member: <u>\$ 13,814</u></p>	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">CNCS</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">Local</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Cost sharing proposed</td> <td style="text-align: center;">%58</td> <td style="text-align: center;">%42</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Min. Match required</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><u>%30</u></td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: right;">AmeriCorps Member Service Years: <u>2</u></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">FT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">HT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">RHT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">QT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">MT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Slots with living allowance</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Education Award only</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> </tr> </table>		CNCS	Local	Cost sharing proposed	%58	%42	Min. Match required	<u>%30</u>			FT	HT	RHT	QT	MT	Slots with living allowance	2	-	-	-	-	Education Award only					-
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Total prior years with CNCS funding: [NA]
Prior experience with CNCS funding: [describe type of grant and how many 3 year grants applicant has had; any special notes about prior funding such as whether it was same or different model, another category of funding.]

Statement of Need (from application narrative):

Summary:

The two AmeriCorps members we propose to engage will build the capacity of food pantries to do the following: engage more volunteers to serve at local pantries; efficiently network with each other to share resources and learn from each other; train volunteers so they are well-versed about community resources and motivated to share this information with patrons; and finally, increase amount of and improve access to more nutritious food. Successfully meeting these goals will improve the health of food pantries and those that they serve.

Narrative:

The service area is Franklin County (by the Canadian border), Livermore and Livermore Falls that are economically depressed mill towns that face the threat of future job losses as the Verso paper mill, the area's largest employer, continues to struggle like many mills in Maine.

14.8% of Franklin County residents live below the poverty line (\$24,600 for a family of four at 100%). Nationally, the rate is 13.5%. Out of a total of 841 households, 41% make \$35,000 or less in household

income. (Source: American Community Survey 2015 Update.) The unemployment rate is at 3.9% compared to a State average of 3%. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

Franklin County was built on the forest products industry, shoe manufacturing, and the ski industry. All are currently at risk or have met their demise. The area's second largest employer, Franklin Community Health Network (FCHN), has downsized significantly in the last five years reducing its workforce by more than 20%.

What do both qualitative and quantitative data reveal about our communities' priority needs?

According to the Western Maine District Health Coordinating Council District Health Improvement Plan the top three priorities are substance abuse prevention, mental health/depression support, and physical activity, obesity, and access to healthy, nutritious food. Poverty was an overarching issue that was a contributing factor to all priorities.

Franklin Memorial Hospital's (FMH) Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), a required community-level population health tool, conducted in 2013 identified the following three health priorities: Chronic Disease Management, Obesity and Colorectal Cancer. Franklin County has almost twice the rate of death due to diabetes, for example, than the State average, and these individuals are frequently accessing food pantry services.

FMH's CHNA also identified poverty as a community priority. FMH is part of FCHN which is integrally involved in bringing Dr. Donna Beegle to the community to engage the community in a multi-step process to become poverty informed. Dr. Beegle is the founder of Communication Across Barriers, a company dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty. UWTVA has been an active participant in the Opportunity Community, receiving more than 12 hours of intensive training and attending four community forums facilitated by Dr. Beegle. It is Dr. Beegle's (and the community's) desire to ensure that individuals can access information readily wherever they seek it and that mentors can help reduce barriers to accessing information. A diverse group of community members are trained navigators. Food pantries are a key access point to information in the Opportunity Community model, however they are under-represented in current efforts. We are fortunate that the director of the area's largest food pantry (Care and Share Food Closet) is participating in the Opportunity Community model training, but more pantries should be involved and we propose to engage them. UWTVA is in year three of its three-year Strategic Plan. As part of the plan's development, community members, funded partners, and corporate partners participated in a community assessment. Food insecurity, rose to the top of the list of identified community needs, followed by transportation, homelessness, violence in the community, access to information, affordable housing and emergency heating assistance.

There are 13 community and school food pantries that UWTVA collaborates with in Greater Franklin County. The majority seek funding through the federally-funded Emergency Food and Shelter Program. Some also seek funding via UWTVA's various community investment processes. (Known widely as United Way allocations.) Data provided during numerous interactions and applications indicate the following:

1. Visits to food pantries are increasing. Care and Share Food Closet, for example, which serves Farmington and the 9 contiguous towns surrounding it, has seen a 20% increase in families served. This busy pantry currently serves just over 500 families a month, up from an average of 403 in fiscal year 2016. In Northern Franklin County, the United Methodist Economic Ministry food pantry is seeing an average of 10 new families a month for the past year.
2. More volunteers are needed to serve the growing need as evidenced from the following: early returns from a Food Pantry survey currently being administered; applications to the Emergency Food and Shelter Program applications and United Way Community Partner Investment applications received in the last five years; anecdotal information shared at the Franklin Volunteer Network (FVN); pleas from food pantries

visited during a United Way Caravan of Caring; and finally data, collected at the first Franklin County Food Summit.

3. Volunteers have limited knowledge about additional community resources to which to connect people. When visiting one large pantry during a Caravan of Caring recently, volunteers were asked if they were referring individuals to the Meals on Wheels program administered locally by Seniors Plus. They were not as they were unaware it existed.
4. Volunteers are not leveraging additional resources or maximizing efforts by communicating with other food pantries in the region.

In April of 2017 UWTVA partnered with the Healthy Community Coalition (HCC) to sponsor a Food Summit to address the increasing challenges in our food system, and to capitalize on opportunities that exist. Challenges that were identified included:

transportation; lack of knowledge around shopping, cooking and budgeting skills; limited utilization/knowledge of tech resources; inconsistent data collection at pantries; pride/shame/stigma of food pantry patrons; lack of funding; price of healthy fresh foods; lack of organization between groups working on food insecurity.

Opportunities included, but were not limited to: screening for hunger at local doctors' offices; improving access to health information for chronic disease prevention (such as diabetes), increasing nutrition and cooking and gardening education at pantries that exists through SNAP Education funding; mobile food deliveries by Good Shepherd; collaboration with distribution centers for access to damaged food; engaging those who are utilizing services in finding solutions; volunteer recruitment and strategic use of volunteers coordinated by United Way's volunteer center; networking opportunities like the Food Summit.

The documented goals from the Food Summit were to strategically build a structure that allows food pantries to efficiently and effectively work together to maximize resources; ensure SNAP benefits can be accepted at local farmers' markets; increase external communications to ensure the public is aware of the issue and how they can help address it; and to collect data from local food pantries in a systematic way, and finally, create a Food Council to support and oversee this work. A local Food Council has been established to oversee progress toward meeting goals and to expand work into other areas, including policy, education, and advocacy. The Food Council has been launched with the guidance and expertise of the coordinator of The Maine Network of Community Food Councils. This network is a collaborative effort of food system activists from Maine communities who are working to create Community Food Councils around the state. The Network strategy is to work together to provide mutual support for communities aiming to create frameworks that engage citizens in building local and regional food systems that provide enduring food security for all folks. The 68 people who gathered at the food Summit also agreed to reconvene in one year at Food Summit II.

Program Summary (from application):

The UWTVA proposes to have two full-time AmeriCorps members who will build capacity in local food pantries in Franklin County and the northern Androscoggin County communities of Livermore and Livermore Falls. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping food pantries to implement three or more effective volunteer management practices. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 25 community volunteers who will serve at food pantries in the service area. This program will concentrate on the CNCS focus area of Healthy Futures. The CNCS investment of \$26,927 will be matched with \$19,443, in private funds secured through United Way of the Tri-Valley Area's diverse revenue generation, including sponsorships, grants, and private donations.

Identified partners:

Franklin Community Health Network, Healthy Community Coalition, 13 local food pantries

SCORING DETAIL**I. Summary of Peer Reviewer Consensus Scores**

(update annually to match CNCS changes in point distribution or organization of narrative)

CATEGORY	Qualitative Rating	Points
Rationale & Approach/Program Design Section (50%)		30.5
Need (5 pts)	Strong	3.75
Intervention (8 pts)	Strong	6
Theory of Change and Logic Model (8 pts)	Satisfactory	4
Work Plan (8 pts)	Satisfactory	4
Notice Priority (1 pts)	Satisfactory	0.5
Member Training (6 pts)	Satisfactory	3
Member Supervision (6 pts)	Strong	4.5
Member Experience (5 pts)	Satisfactory	2.5
Commitment to AmeriCorps ID (3 pts)	Strong	2.25
Organizational Capability Overall Rating 25%		22.5
Organizational Background and Staffing (10 pts)	Strong	7.5
Compliance and Accountability (15 pts)	Exceptional	15
Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy 25%		8.5
Cost Effectiveness (20 pts)	Weak	6
Budget Adequacy (5 pts)	Satisfactory	2.5
TOTAL		61.5 [of 100 possible]

Peer Review Recommendation: Recommend for further review

II. Summary of Task Force Consensus Rating and Final Score:

Category	Rating	Numeric Score
Program Alignment & Model (15 possible points)	Strong	11.25
Past Performance (15 possible points)	Satisfactory	7.5
Financial Plan (10 possible points)	Strong	7.5
Fiscal Systems (10 possible points)	Strong	7.5
GTF Review Total:		[33.75] of 50 possible

III. Final Combined Score

Total		[95.25] of 150 possible
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Final Assessment of Application:

- ☐ Fund with no Corrections
☒ Fund with Corrections
☐ Do Not Fund

Final Recommendation of Grant Selection and Performance Task Force: Fund only with minor corrections

Referenced Conditions/Corrections:

- Minor Budget Corrections

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS COMPILED

Program Design (50 %)

Note: CNCS has subdivided this part of the narrative into 9 parts. The comments indicate the part and follow the narrative outline in the RFP.

Comments: Need

- The applicant provides a wealth of statistical information demonstrating the need for this project, using up-to-date data and valid recognized data sources, and includes county level data. Applicant also describes a compelling example of the magnitude of the food insecurity problem (the UMF food pantry and thrift store high utilization). Applicant clearly addresses all of the assessment criteria for this section, including a depth of community engagement in designing the proposed program.
- Even though this application is to support capacity building, the end outcome of more nutritious food is missing. There is certainly a strong need for building the capacity of local food banks, but the need does not align with the Healthy Futures focus area. Food banks frequently only have high carb and sugar foods – where is the issue of nutrition and access to healthy foods in this effort?
- Multiple sources cited with compelling supporting narrative that includes history of the area and statistical data

Comments: Intervention

- Applicant provides detail and specifics regarding program design, roles and activities of AC members, as well as partners. Core activities defining the program model are well described and are linked to the achievement of specific outcomes/goals. The target population is identified and resources necessary to carry out the program are described. There appears to be a strong community volunteer involvement component.
- Lacking strong evidence of effort to secure more nutritious foods- reaching out to farmers, CSAs, seeking funding to expand access to more produce, educating people about nutrition, classes to learn how to cook more nutritious foods.
- Targets could have been more specific in terms of the parameter or degree that certain increases or changes are expected. That being said, the tactics to support each goal were concrete, measurable, and tangible for an AmeriCorps term.

Comments: Theory of change (narrative text) and logic model

- Applicant provides a wealth of information related to justification for the project proposed, but does not give specific details about the number of people expected to be served. There is solid information related to the rationale behind the targets set. Applicant does identify it intends to add 25 new volunteers to the food pantry network. Applicant describes experience with implementing some elements of this model with Feeding America. Key outcomes are identified, but are not presented in a way that is easily measured, so the ability to measure success is limited. It is clear that applicant has put effort into pre-planning and has a strong structure in place for agency leadership, community partners and stakeholders for capacity building.
- Not strong on the proposed work focus of the AmeriCorps members and how this will lead to improved health outcomes if there isn't a concerted focus on expanding access to more nutritious foods.
- This section of the grant included strong arguments for the power of food banks to influence change. This section could have been presented in a more concise way, merging and splicing information from sources to create a narrative with a more natural flow and clearer points.

Comments: Work Plan

- Applicant describes a thorough, well-thought-out work plan, with all elements addressed, including key accomplishments, tasks and roles and responsibilities for those involved in project implementation. Tangible indicators of progress/completion are provided.
- This is an adequate plan, but, again, I'm not sure how the proposed work will lead to improved health outcomes.
- Overall, the intended accomplishments may be possible for two FT AmeriCorps to make significant progress toward within one AmeriCorps term. However there were accomplishments intended for completion within one quarter that could be more manageable if they were broken up into parts that were distributed across multiple quarters. For example, Accomplishment 2, Quarter 1, Food Pantries work more effectively with volunteers to provide services to clients."

Comments: Funding Priority

- Applicant provides this information succinctly.
- Again, the funding priority focuses on improved nutrition for youth, or increased access to preventative services. The narrative did not have a focus on youth. One could infer that increased access to services and food for adults would have a positive effect on youth, but that was not demonstrated in the narrative.

Comments: Member Training

- Applicant provides few details for comprehensive member training that is relevant.
- Not much detail about how the site would orient the members to the specific program content and the greater community.
- Host Agency orientation and AmeriCorps orientations are included in this narrative. Noticeably absent is an orientation to the context of the work itself - this could have included tours of food pantries, interviews with current volunteers, town hall experiences within the surrounding country.

Comments: Member Supervision

- Applicant describes a strong plan of supervision and support, including weekly meetings and brainstorming sessions with supervisor and UWTVA staff.
- The site has a solid staffing structure in place.
- United Way of Tri-Valley Area appears to be aware of the layers of supervision that optimize potential for success for an AmeriCorps member. Identifying mentors or leaders within the field (at food pantries, etc.) who would also play a role in guiding members would have made this section exceptional.

Comments: Member Experience

- Applicant asserts that AC members will gain skills and experience, but does not provide specific examples of employment skill sets. Applicant does indicate time for reflection and connection to the National Service network is planned, and gives sufficient information for this component. Applicant describes its plan to recruit AC members from its region.
- AmeriCorps member experiences extend beyond the AmeriCorps and agency identity and include access to affordable housing, healthcare, food, etc. during their service term. These areas of support for an AmeriCorps are not included in this grant, but could have been included into the Member Experience section to make it stronger.

Comments: Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

- Applicant succinctly describes its plan for ensuring this criterion is met.
- Fits the minimum requirements.
- Agency demonstrates that they have researched AmeriCorps requirements for identification and will support Corps members in their realization of their AmeriCorps "cultural norms" (branding, encouraged and prohibited activities, etc.).
- Thorough – covers points required.

Section: Organizational Capability (25%)**Comments: Organizational Background and Staffing**

- Applicant is well positioned and provides specific examples relative to each of these areas
- Solid staffing structure in place with an engaged board of directors.
- The goals and tactics for the 2 FT AmeriCorps are significant. In order to reasonably expect the AmeriCorps to accomplish these tactics, this section did not specify how the staff and volunteers already in place would manage their current responsibilities while also being available to provide a foundation of support for the incoming AmeriCorps.

Comments: Compliance and Accountability

- Applicant provides strong evidence of its ability to ensure risk is avoided, internal controls are in place, and well-described. Reviewer was impressed with the example included about its hosting of a workshop for nonprofits relative to risk assessment/ avoidance (Staying Safe: Emerging Threats).
- good checks and balances in place – did not omit any points
- Concise and clear standards are mentioned.
- Recent training on risk management is impressive.

Section: Budget and Cost Effectiveness (25%)**Comments: Cost Effectiveness**

- It does not appear that applicant specifically addresses this element, as it describes reviewing policies and procedures, rather than addressing appropriateness of its proposed budget relative to achieving its program goals...there seems to be a disconnect to the assessment criteria.
- Did not discuss budget as criteria required. Discussed policies and procedure review.
- This text was more appropriate for compliance/accountability. Applicant did not address the criteria.

Comments: Budget Adequacy

- Applicant's budget appears to meet all criteria for this element.
- Applicant followed directions and requested the maximum allowed with match.
- Well justified. Complete and feasible. No weaknesses or noticeable holes.

Peer Review Summary Appraisal

1. Having reviewed all elements of the proposal provided to you, do you think that this applicant could be effective in this category of grant?

Yes. Recommend for further review.

Why or why not? Please be specific and cite evidence from the proposal.

- Overall, applicant describes a comprehensive plan to affect positive outcomes in the community specific to an identified community need. Applicant has invested time and energy in involving the community to design the intervention and to plan for implementation.
- Maybe I am overthinking this application and the Healthy Futures priority area, but they did not address the focus on youth and obesity in this grant.
- Narrative demonstrates that volunteer infrastructure and improved networking between food security agencies could improve access to food for food insecure residents of Androscoggin and Franklin Counties. Goals and tactics describe tangible actions that AmeriCorps could take to improve communication across volunteers and communities, therefore progressing towards a Healthy Futures goal of improved food security.

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- All elements seem clear.
- It was unclear how this grant fit in with the Healthy Futures funding priority.
- Cost effectiveness included policy compliance vs. tangible examples of how the agency would seek maximum ROI/ be the most effective with resources.

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

- This reviewer believes the applicant has responded well to each of the elements in this proposal. There is strong linkage to an identified community need, the intervention described has appropriate goals and strategies to have a positive impact towards creating real community change, and is well integrated with other community initiatives.
- I think this work would be compelling, but I'm not sure how this will lead to the desired outcomes.
- What are the sources of housing, healthcare and food available to AmeriCorps living on a low budget in the service area? Incorporating this into the narrative would have made this proposal exceptional.

TASK FORCE REVIEWER COMMENT DETAIL:

Program Model

- This application has a strong explanation of need and plan to address the needs of this community.
- The program seems to align well with Maine's priority of addressing food insecurity. While others have indicated that it does not match well with the federal health priority, I believe elements of the program could certainly address this issue through support for education re: healthy living and the information and referral network they are working to improve to direct clients to potential resources. May be more a narrative shortcoming than not addressing the national priority. Need is well defined and articulated. Although much of the data referenced is relatively recent, the 2014 study may be outdated re: health areas given changes in federal health policy. Since those are all up in the air, may not really matter.

The focus is primarily on capacity building within existing institutions. It's clear, however, that by building capacity, program effectiveness in addressing a wider range of needs would result.

The work plan that has been laid out may be challenging given the limited number of members, the number of organizations they will be dealing with, and the large geographic area involved. However, it should be possible to meet.

Clearly food insecurity is a growing problem throughout Maine and the success of this program could serve as a model for other areas, particularly in regard to volunteer recruitment and training in other potential resources beyond food pantries that clients could access for broader support.

The organization clearly has experience and knowledge in the area of volunteer recruitment and management and is well positioned to support sub agencies in these areas.

Past Performance

- There was not much detail provided regarding the previous grant experience and it was troubling to read that the goals were not met and then not have much information to help understand why.
- As a United Way Agency, it has experience in handling and managing grant funds. While it may not have handled a National Service Grant before, the capability is there. They appear to have reasonable systems in place to ensure accountability and manage risk.

Financial Plan

- Financial plan is sound for the goals proposed.
- As noted in the various reports, the budget needs some work. This is not unusual or unexpected since experienced grantees seem to frequently have the same problem. I share the concern that details of the match are not provided; however, it is a relatively small amount and it looks to me like most, if not all, of it is actually being covered by the agencies base budget, funded through community donations. Given that food insecurity has obviously been established as an agency priority, this is not surprising and I'm not concerned that the match will be met.

Fiscal Systems

- All fiscal systems are strong and capable of managing the funds requested.
- This is a long established agency that has policies and procedures in place to address financial management. Agency appears to be in good financial shape.

Task Force Summary Appraisal

Having reviewed all elements of the proposal provided to you, do you think that this applicant would be effective?

- Yes.

Why or why not? Please be specific and cite evidence from the proposal.

- Financially strong, established agency

What elements of the proposal are unclear?

- Minor budget clarifications needed

What else do you have to say about this proposal?

Recommend for funding with minor budget corrections